

Accession Number: A/5-b

Classification:

Date: 10 May 1974 3:00-4:50 p.m.

Place: Evanston 1821 Laurel

Interview with: Henrietta Taylor

Interview by: S.F. Patton

Observations: Mrs. Taylor was extremely affable. Interview proceeded well until entry of her daughter, Priscilla. She would interject; sometimes Mrs. Taylor would request verification of some of her responses. Priscilla responses are bracketed with the initial letter "P". Again Mrs Taylor started speaking without my asking questions.

1. A. They called my uncle Henry "Black Hawk" because of all that thick dark hair. Did i show you his photograph?  
(she then showed me the photograph of her husband, her aunt Sarah and Uncle Henry)

2 Q. I wanted to ask you about the cab company and the Blacksmiths

A. Oh yes, Myrtle Perrin called me. Remember the Caterer Cromer. She bought property. My daughter bought on McDaniel. They invested their money well. There's the funeral home, John Rayner runs it. His father worked for a casket company before he started.

3 Q. How old is John Rayner

A. The Home is right there on Emerson. Where Robinson Bus Co. is. Prim Towers is next to it for senior citizens. \$100 a month! ---for one room. There are a lot of Whites in Prim Towers.

4 Q. Who owns the Robinson Bus Co.

A. The mother, but the sons run it. There's two. My granddaughter teaches at the Shore School for Retarded Children.

5 Q. What is her name

A. Delores Harden, she had three children





6 Q. Are her children in Evanston

A. Yes. Miss Pocock, I talked to her. She said she started teaching dancing in Evanston schools before she had her own dancing school.. She taught tap, ballet. I was a dressmaker then. I wore a black dress with white apron and cap. Friday night, she taught ballroom. On Saturday she taught ballet, toe and tap. That was from 9:00 to 12:00. Monday afternoon she taught ballroom.

7 Q. Miss Pocock

A. In south Evanston, district #65 there are three schools Lincoln is on the east side. Central on the mid-section and Washington on the west side.

8 Q. Is miss Pocock White

A. Yes. She lives on Orrington, 1819, Ave. Her telephone number is 864-2592

9 Q. is Mrs. Robinson your age

A. Oh no, near as I can figure out she is in her 60's

10 Q. When did she start the Bus company

A. They started with just 2 or 3 buses, hauling children to school. There were not too many children in the past. Times were hard then.

11 Q. Must have been in the 1930's, during the Depression

A. No, in the 1960's

12 Q. There weren't many children in the 1960's

A. No. Some children were in day nurseries

13 Q. Did the women stay home with the children during 1920's

A. Not too many had children then, and when they did the oldest child would take care of the children

14 Q. What did most of the women do

A. Laundry, daywork in people's homes

15 Q. What type of work were most of the men doing in 1920's

A. They were shouveling coal, they worked for coal places they would haul 50 lbs. bags





16 Q. Did the men work in White's homes

A. Well, Holmes---John. James Norman served parties at the Women's Club in Evanston.

17 Q. Were there any Black Chauffeurs

A. No cars then. Oh the men built roads too

18 Q. Any Black men as cooks

A. As I said, rich White people were very particular who they wanted in the house. These people couldn't read; they couldn't speak good English. They were illiterate and the child would minick them.

There was the Marx Manufacturing Factory. It was around Dempster St.---west, you see. They had day and night workers. The factory made sewer pipes

19 Q. This was around the '20's

A. Yes

20 Q. The men were mostly hard labourers

A. Yes

21 Q. Did you recall any visible signs of the Depression

A. I had St. Vitus, so I couldn't go out like other children. I didn't see that much outside. I was taken care of by my grandmother, and was babied. I was mad fun of by the children.

22 Q. What was your grandmother's name

A. Barbara Blankenheim. She spoke German all the time. She'd often talk about the Reine Province.

23 Q. Did the Depression affect Negro job opportunities

A. Well, like I said they worked for coal companies

24 Q. Did the men have uniforms in uncle Henry's business

A. The stables were on Davis and Maple near the railroad. Many men would just come off the train and go to Uncle Henry's for a job. He would furnish them with a meal ticket and a p





place to stay. They slept in the loft of the barn. No, no uniforms.

25 Q. Were they paid weekly

A. Yes. But the amount would vary; sometimes they's show, sometimes not

26 Q. Did they earn about \$ 20 a week

A. Steady ones yes. Dr. Hill when she was studying her profession; from 9:00 - 12:00 at night she worked. The men would "settle-up" at the desk. Mrs. Fischer, the Scots woman she would stay late

27 Q. Your uncle Henry had Blacksmiths

A. Oh! Myrtle Perrin. She has one son named Osburn. She called me after I talked with you; she said the family was Kirkman, not Kirk. They were millionaires

28 Q. Your uncle had blacksmiths

A. Yes. On Maple Ave, 1800

29 Q. Was it in a separate building

A. Yes. There were around 75 horses

30 Q. How many blacksmiths were there

A. That's what I wanted to tell you. Miller Perrin was in charge. I don't know how many altogether. He, Miller had and anvil

(P: they had 12 children.)

31 Q. When did you meet your husband

A. A cousin my mother raised lived in Morgan Park. I would go there; they had a roller skating rink out there. That is where I met my husband.

32 Q. How old were you

A. I was about 17 When I married him I was in my twenties. He had been married before, and had not yet gotten his divorce. So we had to wait. He was from Metropolis Illinois.

33 Q. Was you husband living in Chicago

A. Yes. His grandmother came to Chicago then she moved and bought a house in Woodlawn

34 Q. He was drafted soon after marriage

A. Yes He went to Camp Grant in Rockford, Illinois





35 Q. How old was he, around 26

A. Yes around that

36 Q. You were 17 years old when you first met him

A. Yes, he must have been 20

37 Q. Your grandfather had 5 to 6 children

A. Yes. His mother was an Indian squaw

38 Q. Did he ever mention his mother's name

A. No he was dead when I was born

39 Q. Did all 5 or 6 children in Evanston

A. Joe, Theodore, Henry, Ben and Charlie

40 Q. Were any in business

A. Joe and his two sons had a grocery store. On Green bay and 2600.

41 Q. Was this before the Depression

A. It was all around the Depression. Nobody profited. Times were hard since the Civil war. My cousin was in the Spanish-American War. W.W.I took a lot of the people. W.W.I was the beginning of the depression. My grandmother \$10 for her husband's death

42 Q. Was Uncle Theodore the only Black man who owned a grocery

A. Oh no. Jewish people had trays hanging from their neck with odds and ends. They would walk all over the country

43 Q. Did any Blacks do this

A. No. Blacks have never been inventor of things, that is of any real value. They were trained as hirelings

Dr. Bryant, on the corner, he went to Europe, Rome for medical training

44 Q. How old is Dr. Bryant

A. He's been dead for years. He was one of the first



doctors. There's Dr. Garnett, she had two brothers

45 Q. Dr. Belle Garnett (ISABELE)

A. Dr. Hill is still alive

46 Q. When did he go to Europe, Dr. Bryant

A. He looked like White

47 Q. Was he an old Evanstonian

A. I think so

48 Q. How long did Joe have the store

A. He had Hattie, Mary, Louise and two boys. Varsity theatre was where she was a pianist. Louise, she used to play the piano while the movies was being shown

49 Q. Was the grocery store very profitable

A. No-o !

50 Q. What about uncle Ben

A. He lived in south Evanston. He married an Irish woman; they had four children. He and uncle Theodore had the Express and Van Mover Co. The wives couldn't get along. Each then had a separate business because of their wives

Northwestern Univ. was originally for men, then it became co-ed. There was Chaffin, Willard and Pearson Hall; each with its own matron. My uncle Theodore used to go to the halls and get claim checks for the baggage and deliver the baggage to different halls

51 Q. How long did uncles Theodore and Ben have the business

A. For five years. The wives liked to argue however. Aggie was from Canada

52 Q. Any name for your uncle Theodore's business

A. No, just T. Butler Express

53 Q. What did uncle Ben do

A. He stayed in south Evanston. He took over the van and he hauled pianos; heavy objects





54 Q. What was the name of his business

A. Express and Van Movers.

(P: he had 3 sons, one died)

My mother was a mid-wife for uncle Ben

55 Q. How long did Uncle Ben have the business

A. Oh, until he died

(P: his son kept it after his death)

56 Q. When did uncle Ben die

A. (P: around 1950's)

57 Q. Uncle Ben and Theodore had the business during the 1920's

A. Yes

58 Q. Any coloured doctors when you were born

A. Let's see, my mother had two boys before me, both died.  
No, no coloured doctors, only White

59 Q. Did most of the mothers deliver at home or the hospital

A. Mostly at home. You had mid-wives then

60 Q. Did uncle Ben and Theodore employ men

A. Uncle Ben didn't like Blacks, he had men and he always had white. Uncle Theodore employed White. I used to work in the office of Uncle Theodore

61 Q. Did either of them belong to a labour union

A. You catch as catch can. I don't thing so. It was a long time before they took Blacks

62 Q. Do you recall any other founding Evanston families

A. Before or after we got here

63 Q. Either time

A. The Eaton family came after. they had 9 kids and  
(P: no Edens, ma.) Yes. um-hum. There was John Walls family.





64 Q. Were there many Blacks in high school

A. There was the Miller family.

In those days if a girl could get a job she'd quit and go to work. Evanston was on Greenleaf and Sherman

When I was at Central I couldn't be in the play, so they let me write the play. I called it the Troubadour.

65 Q. When did you notice a great influx of Blacks

A. After the Chicago Fire when Whites came. My father was a cook and waiter to Milwaukee on the Chicago Burlington and Quincy R.R.

66 Q. Did Blacks come with White families

A. They may have brought help with them

67 Q. Did Blacks come from South

A. Most came from Northern cities. W.W.I brought a lot into the Northern states

68 Q. What did the other children of your mother and father do

A. I didn't give names of the girls did I

69 Q. No

A. Sarah went to Nebraska. Mary had two girls: Lizzie and Flora. Flora's daughter's name was Pristine. Lizzie married Mr. Russell who used to have a garage on Emerson where uncle Henry had the business

70 Q. When did uncle Henry pass

A. (P: in 1952 or 1953)

71 Q. How old was uncle Henry when he died

A. (P: in his 70's. He was the first Black millionaire in Evanston)

72 Q. Did you have any animals kept here

A. Oh yes. We use to raise chickens on Emerson. Saturday...

73 Q. Saturday

A. Well, we started Friday night. We would sell on Satur



day. I got so I could wring the necks of the chickens.  
(P: they had turkeys too)

74 Q. You did this by yourself

A. No, the first Mrs. Russell and myself did it. Mother raised Lizzie.

75 Q. Who is the first Mrs. Russell

A. She's my cousin. They had a house on Emerson, right up here (points toward corner)

76 Q. Her name is Lizzie

A. Yes. Lizzie is the first Mrs. Russell

77 Q. How many chickens did you have

A. (P: 500 baby chicks came in the mail. They had a galvanite brooder)

78 Q. How much did the chickens sell for

A. around \$1

79 Q. Did you sell anything else

A. No  
(P: no, we had hens)

80 Q. When did you start selling

A. 1920's

81 Q. How long, just a couple of years

A. Yes

82 Q. What was your grandfather's name

A. Butler

83 Q. What was his first name

A. Cornelius, I think

84 Q. Your grandmother came to Evanston, but before that she was in Kenosha right

A. Yes





85 Q. When did your grandmother meet your grandfather--in Evanston

A. Must have been in Kenosha. All the children were christened in Kenosha. They brought cow, pigs and grapevine with them.

86 Q. There was a lot of land per family then

A. Yes. Evanston was like a country town. This, here was woods from Dempster north to west of Ridge ave. This was all under water.

87 Q. You mentioned your grandfather built houses

A. He built three on 1031 Sherman. My grandmother had the money; my grandfather had nothing

